

Titus 2:11-12 11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age

Central idea – The grace that brought salvation to you is the same grace that teaches or disciplines you. But you must respond on the basis of grace, not law. That is why you must “preach the gospel to yourself every day”.

Developing the Discipline of Grace

1. Bridges contends that his title, “Disciplined by Grace” seems like an oxymoron to those who feel discipline and grace are opposites.
 - a. From your background, what connotations do you associate with discipline?

 - b. What connotations do you associate with grace?

 - c. Do these terms seem like opposites to you?

2. Bridges is now grateful for the grace-filled, foundational disciplines of the Christian life, especially daily quiet time, Bible study, Scripture memorization and prayer. But when he first became a Christian, he regarded the Bible largely as a rule book telling what to do (or not do). The practical “shoulda-oughta-gotta” precepts of the Bible commanded, but they gave no ability to obey. They left him feeling guilty and helpless – all because of recurring sin patterns that were resistant to more and more Bible study.
 - a. What are some of the disciplines of the Christian life to which you were first exposed when you became a Christian?

 - b. Which of those disciplines are you still keeping up and why?

 - c. Which have fallen by the wayside and why?

 - d. How do you feel about that?

3. Are you like the student who explained that he was rigid in his practice of a daily quiet time “so nothing bad will happen to me?”
 - a. Do you sense God’s smile or frown depends on whether or not you do your spiritual exercises?
 - b. What is wrong with that kind of thinking?
 - c. How does one lay a proper foundation and motivation for spiritual growth?

4. Many of us have friends and relatives who profess to be Christians but in whose lives there appears to be no evidence of the discipline of grace. Oftentimes we cling to a frail hope that such persons are believers because they made a profession some time ago, but with nothing to show for it, It seems parents are especially prone to this form of denial regarding children who show no evidence of a genuine work of grace. Without making any judgments as to the reality of another person’s salvation, what are you looking for as evidence that a friend or family member is indeed a Christian?

5. What does it look like in practice to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions? For instance, consider a person who has such a strong passion to be applauded for achievements at work that he neglects his family. What would be involved in this person saying no to his worldly passion?

6. Take a minute on your own to think of any ungodliness or worldly passion to which you need to say no. Write it down.

7. In Ephesians 4:22-32, Paul stresses that putting off sinful habits and putting on Christ-like ones deserve equal attention from us.

22 that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, **23** and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, **24** and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. **25** Therefore, putting away lying, “*Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,*”^[a] for we are members of one another. **26** “*Be angry, and do not sin*”:^[b] do not let the sun go down on your wrath, **27** nor give place to the devil. **28** Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. **29** Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. **30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. **32** And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

For instance, in 4:28 he tells thieves not only to put off stealing, but also to put on generosity. If someone in our fellowship who had been stealing made a definitive break with that practice, we would rejoice over a major victory won. But Paul would not be satisfied until that person had also acquired a generous spirit of helping others in need. That brings to mind three attitudes that we can have toward money and possessions. Which of these attitudes sounds most like the way you live your life?

- a. What’s yours is mine; I will take it
 - b. What’s mine is mine; I will keep it.
 - c. What’s mine is God’s; I will share it
8. The principle of putting off/putting on is seen again in our speech (Ephesians 4:29). We are to put off unwholesome talk (not just vulgar speech or obscene jokes, but also criticism, complaining, gossip and the like) and put on what is constructive, thankful, and builds up others. Which of these attitudes sounds most like you?
- a. If I don’t have anything nice to say, I don’t say anything at all
 - b. It’s not enough to stop complaining; I will start being constructive.
 - c. My speech is always wholesome, edifying to others, and full of thanksgiving to God.
 - d. Other

9. Here is one final checklist to measure how you sense you are being disciplined. Check T or F, whichever applies to you.

T F While God is disciplining me by His grace, I perceive it as more by law

T F I see the grace of God disciplining me, even by His Word and adverse circumstances

T F I labor under the burden of guilt

T F I accept the forgiveness of God's grace

T F The Bible is the only a rule book of commands that I am struggling to obey by my own willpower

T F I am relying on my union with Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit for the power to respond to God's training

What's the point of all this?

With all this emphasis on practical Christian living, we must not lose sight of the fact that it is grace – not law – that teaches us.